

APRIL 2010

SW FLORIDA TROPICAL FRUIT NEWS

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CLUB NEWS

COLLIER FRUIT GROWERS

WWW.COLLIERFRUIT.ORG

The next meeting is Monday, April 19th. The program will feature Tim Gast, Citrus Horticulturist at Southern Gardens Citrus. His speciality is citrus greening and is involved in the research that is focused on this problem.

The club meets on the third Monday of the month at 7pm for socializing and enjoying the tasting table. The program starts at 7:30pm.

Meetings are at the Golden Gate Community Center, 4701 Golden Gate Parkway, Naples.

Membership and change of address. Family membership is \$25; renewals before February 1, \$15. Commercial membership, \$100, includes a business-card ad in each 10 issues of the newsletter (a year's worth). Send checks and change of address information to CFG, c/o Mary Fehr, 137 Debron Dr., Naples FL 34112.

Tasting table. Please share your fruit and earn a free raffle ticket.

BONITA SPRINGS TROPICAL FRUIT CLUB

The next meeting is Tuesday, April 13th. The program will feature Pat Johnson, the local expert on herbs. She will identify herbs that grow well in southwest Florida, explain how to grow them, and suggest uses for them.

Meetings are held at the First United Methodist Church, 27690 Shriver Ave., Bonita Springs (from Old 41, turn east on Crockett and left on Shriver).

The board of directors meets monthly before the regular meeting. NOTE: This is a change from the past when it met before the workshop.

Bimonthly workshop. The next discussion group is April 23 at 7pm.

Membership. Dues are \$15. Send checks to Tom Betts, 25071 Pennyroyal Lane, Bonita Springs, FL 34134.

Upcoming date. November 13, fall tree sale at Riverside Park, Bonita Springs.

APRIL CALENDAR

April 3. Growing Herbs in South Florida. 10am-noon. Fruit and Spice Park, Homestead. 305-247-5727.

April 10. Yard Tour. Eden School for Autism, 2101 County Barn Rd., Naples. 11am tour by John Puig. 601-2919.

April 10. 2010 Herb Day. 9am-noon. \$8 with pre-registration. Lee County Extension, 3406 Palm Beach Blvd. Fort Myers. 239-533-7514.

April 10. Edible Landscaping Without Pesticides. 10am-noon. Fruit and Spice Park, Homestead. 305-247-5727.

April 13. Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club monthly meeting. 7pm. First United Methodist Church, 27690 Shriver Ave., Bonita Springs. 992-4664. The board meets at 6pm.

April 13, 20, 27. Urban Enterprise Farming by IFAS Extension Collier County. For small acreage farmers. Classes: 6-9pm. 353-4244.

April 19. Collier Fruit Growers monthly meeting. 7pm. Golden Gate Community Center, 4701 Golden Gate Parkway, Naples. 609-2919.

April 24. Edible Wild Plants. 10-noon. Fruit and Spice Park, Homestead. 305-247-5727.

April 27. Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club workshop. 7pm. First United Methodist Church, 27690 Shriver Ave., Bonita Springs. 992-4664.

May 4, 11, 18. Urban Crop Production by IFAS Extension Collier County. General fruit and vegetable production techniques for home gardener and urban farmer. Classes: 6-9pm. 353-4244.

UNDERUTILIZED FRUIT TREES

Charles Boning, author of *Florida's Best Fruiting Plants* and the Collier club's March speaker, spoke on this topic. His nominations for underutilized trees:

- jujube —Indian or Chinese
- white sapote— Homestead or Coolidge
- mulberry —Tice or Illinois everbearing
- feijoa —Nazemetz
- grumichama
- canistel —Oro or Trompo
- persimmon —Triumph (astringent)

COLLIER FRUIT GROWERS

Collier Fruit Growers is an active nonprofit organization dedicated to introducing, propagating and distributing the

many rare tropical and subtropical fruits grown throughout the world, as well as offering education in these areas and encouragement to extend their cultivation. CFG functions without regard to race, color or national origin.

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BSTFC TREE SALE— DEFINITELY FRUITFUL

The sun shone on Bonita's tree sale March 6th at Riverside Park in Bonita Springs, even if it was breezy and the temps cool. An abundance of volunteers showed up. The many hands and cheerful faces warmed everyone up and made the work easier.

The activity started very early: Steve Cucura with Treehouse Nursery arrived from Pine Island with the tropical fruit trees and Frank DeNardis with the citrus trees. Leftover citrus trees were also purchased from Collier Fruit Growers from their sale the previous week.

The tree signs recently made for the sale were put to good use, directing customers to the kind of trees they were interested in. They proved an excellent investment. To keep them in good condition, member Monica Wagar, an expert seamstress, quickly created an accordion-type item that provided a fabric sleeve for each of the two dozen or so signs.

The tasting table was filled with baked goods and fruit donated by members. As we all know, sometimes all it takes is a taste of the fruit to sell a particular tree.

Volunteers filled out complimentary aluminum tags for the trees being purchased, ensuring that cultivar information would be preserved indefinitely.

Everyone was pleased when treasurer Tom Betts announced at the March meeting that the sale was successful, even more so than last year's. Trevor Parks, chair of the tree sale committee, did another great job. He thanks all the members who lent a hand.

WHAT'S RIPE THIS MONTH IN THE BACKYARD

The cold comes and goes. We've had glimpses of warmer weather, so plants are flushing with flowers and new growth.

It's a good time to fertilize and apply soap or nutritional sprays. Hold back water and fertilizer on cold-damaged trees relative to the amount of damage. Pruning back damage can begin in earnest.

Frank DeNardis has a tree heavy with canistel. There's also black sapote, carambola, citrus, and soon—mulberries.

Don't forget to smell the citrus flowers. They're heavenly.

avocado	guava	pineapple
banana	grumichama	Rio Grande cherry
Barbados cherry	jaboticaba	sapodilla
blackberry	loquat	sapote, white
carambola	miracle fruit	star apple
coconut	mulberry	Surinam cherry
custard apple	muntingia	tamarind
	papaya	

Officers

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BONITA SPRINGS TROPICAL FRUIT CLUB

The purpose is to introduce and distribute the many rare and tropical and subtropical fruits grown throughout the world; to inform, educate and advise members and the public in the selection of these valuable tree crops, to encourage their cultivation. Where possible, the organization will produce a basis for researching and producing new cultivars and hybrids.

THIS APRICOT'S JUICY SECRET IS WORTH REVEALING

BY NORIS LEDESMA
FAIRCHILD TROPICAL BOTANIC GARDEN

The tropical apricot (*Mammea americana*) is one of the best-kept tropical fruit secrets. No relation to the true temperate apricot of the northern climes, this fruit is a bit of a challenge, but worth the effort.

A handsome evergreen, it resembles a southern magnolia at first glance and naturally forms a pyramidal, pleasing canopy. The tree has dense foliage with glossy, leathery leaves of hunter green. It is a great asset that will provide a point of pride among your neighbors.

Native to the West Indies and northern South America, the tree produces large, round brown fruit, with a deep orange flesh. The flesh is highly fragrant, with a flavor of apricots and berries and can be eaten fresh or used in jellies, preserves or sherbets.

The fruit is eaten while the flesh is still firm. A cut fruit can be left on the kitchen counter and it will not brown. Now, try that with apples or the temperate apricot.

On the island of Hispaniola, home to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the tree and fruit are highly esteemed. Towering walls of green grace home gardens across the island, enhancing the Caribbean ambience.

The flowers are used in the liqueur Eau de Créole, another signature flavor of the islands. In Jamaica the fruit are cooked with wine and sugar and served as a warm or cold dessert. Here at home the fruit has the perfect consistency for pies, tarts and preserves. But perhaps the best use of the fruit is eating it fresh out of hand, as do the people of Central America and northern South America.

Propagation of the tropical apricot for the home garden is typically from seed. The tree is not commonly found in nurseries in South Florida, but with a bit of perseverance, one can locate and purchase a healthy tree.

The next hurdle is that the tree comes in a male and female version. This may sound romantic, but it makes the growing of a seedling a risky business. It can be quite a blow to wait for eight years or so only to find out that your tree is a male and will produce no fruit.

The best solution is to grow a grafted tree. Specialty nurseries in South Florida are beginning to propagate

known female selections, and these trees are becoming more common. At present the varieties "Redlands" and "Kay Sweeney" can be purchased on a routine basis.

In the next few years there will be more quality selections available from local hobbyists and the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.

A quality grafted tree will fruit even in isolation, although a male tree in close proximity may improve yields. A grafted tree will begin to flower and fruit in three to five years after planting.

The tropical apricot grows best in a fertile, well-drained soil with high organic matter, but will tolerate heavy, poor, acid or alkaline soils.

The tree should be planted in full sun and the warmest spot in the garden. Cold sensitivity is probably its most serious limitation, and young trees -- which will be killed by temperatures that fall below 30 degrees for only a few hours -- should be protected on the coldest nights of the winter. Small trees can be covered by a sheet or with a cardboard box, taking care to not let the leaves touch the sheet.

Young trees prefer regular watering, but mature trees can do quite nicely without it. The tree will thrive in our monsoon climate, remaining green and healthy throughout the drought months.

Addition of mulch to the soil surface will improve water-holding capacity, nutrient retention and availability and soil structure.

Fertilizer should be applied three times a year -- preferably in March, July and September -- with an 8-3-9 or other fruit tree formulation. Do not fertilize after September, as you will make the tree more susceptible to cold damage. You must go into the winter months with the tree calm and prepared for cold.

In southern Florida, the tropical apricot ripens mostly in late summer and fall and falls to the ground when ripe. They can also be picked when they reach full size and change from greenish to orange brown, but this will take some practice to master.

The tropical apricot is a tree well worth the time and worry. With just a little care, the tree will reward the gardener with a beautiful landscape and delicious fare.--*Noris Ledesma is the curator of tropical fruit at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.*

WEKIWA MANDARIN/ TANGELO

Your editor takes credit for stirring interest in this odd-ball citrus hybrid. I came across it while scouting trees for the tree sale at J&N Nursery in Golden Gate, Naples. The relatively small tree I bought was in a 3-gallon pot. It was loaded with golf-ball size fruit that looked a lemon but sure didn't taste like a lemon.

The fruit first came from California in 1930 but was not introduced to the public in Florida until the 1980's. It's a cross between a Duncan grapefruit and a Sampson tangelo (¾ grapefruit, ¼ Dancy tangerine).

The irresistible result is a very juicy tangelo, which tastes and looks like a pink grapefruit (red-blushed pulp, yellow rind), albeit a small one, but is sweet like a tangerine. Sometimes known as pink tangelo or lavender gem, it can be substituted for grapefruit. It's easily separated into 12 segments with few seeds.

The tree bears fruit at a younger age than other tangelos and is very productive, according to one source. It can grow to 15' sporting naturally droopy branches but is not overly robust. The fruit ripens from December to February. No pollinator is required. [Frank DeNardis still has a few in his nursery.]

APRIL IN THE VEGGIE PATCH

You can continue planting (or replanting) but bear in mind that the heat will return. At that point our "winter" veggies fizzle and we switch to varieties that can take the heat.

Tomatoes continue struggling with the cold temps. This is my third planting. I'm replanting cucumbers, beans, and eggplant. If you like basil, opt for African blue basil, which is indifferent to cold and heat. The greens are thriving.

Beans	Dill	Parsnips
Beets	Eggplant	Peas, English
Broccoli	Endive	Radish
Brussels sprouts	Kale	Rutabaga
Cabbage	Kohlrabi	Spinach
Cantaloupe	Lettuce	Squash
Carrots	Mustard	Tomatoes
Collards	Okra	Turnips
Corn	Onions	
Cucumber	Parsley	

FIELD TRIP TO REDLAND SUMMER FRUIT FESTIVAL

Trips by Madeline brings us another field trip June 19 to the annual Redland Summer Fruit Festival at Fruit and Spice Park in Homestead. This is another one-stop destination, which avoids all the getting on and off the bus and keeps us on time.

This annual event showcases local agriculture and tropical fruit plants. Some 40 vendor booths typically feature local wines, fresh-fruit smoothies, fresh fruits and veggies, nursery plants, rare-fruit ice cream, chocolate-dipped strawberries, and, plenty of rare-fruit samplings. Last year boasted more than 160 varieties of mango for tasting. Live music is planned, as well as a petting zoo and a watermelon eating contest,

Typically there is a lychee/longan workshop Saturday afternoon that covers cultivation, propagation, and grafting techniques and a chance to pepper experts with your questions.

This trip falls on a Saturday so it gives folks who can't make it on weekdays an opportunity to go.

MANGO CAKE (VEGAN)

This was served at the Collier tree sale's tasting table and in response to the many requests for the recipe, here it is:

2 cups self-rising flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1/4 tsp. cream of tartar

Mix that together then add:

3/4 cup sugar or agave nectar
1 cup mango puree
1/2 cup vegetable oil
3/4 cup pecans chopped
1 Tbsp. lemon juice
1 tsp. vanilla
3/4 cup soy milk

Mix all together and bake at 350 for 30-40 minutes.

NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST

If there's a problem with your address or if you have a change of address:

* Bonita club members please notify Tim Deaton at 992-4664 or timdeaton@yahoo.com

* Collier club members please notify Mary Fehr at 774-1047 or fehmary@earthlink.net

**GOT QUESTIONS ABOUT GROWING TROPICAL
FRUIT? WE'VE GOT ANSWERS.**

Check out our website www.collierfruit.org

Our clubs have many experienced backyard and professional growers. Bring your fruity questions to the next meeting or have them posted in the newsletter (fruitnflowers@gmail.com). You can also call the Collier Extension Service plant clinic at 353-2872, M/W/F 9am-noon and 1-4pm. The Lee County Extension horticulture desk can be reached during those hours at 239-533-7504.

Don't overlook online resources about tropical fruits. For instance, you can access the full text of Julia Morton's [Fruit of Warm Climates](http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/morton/index.html) at www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/morton/index.html.

APRIL 2010 FRUIT NEWS
PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP.

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